

**SUMMARY OF THE
SEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LABORATORY ACCREDITATION CONFERENCE
MAY 21 - 25, 2001**

INTRODUCTION

The National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) held its Seventh Annual Meeting, NELAC 7, May 21-25, 2001 at the Little America Hotel, in Salt Lake City, Utah. The meeting was co-sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Utah Department of Health. There were 288 individuals registered for the meeting.

The meeting opened with a plenary session in which perspectives on NELAC and the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) were reviewed. The keynote address was provided by Mr. Brent Bradford, Deputy Director, Utah Department of Environmental Quality. Dr. Ken Jackson provided a report from the Accrediting Authority Workgroup, Mr. George Mills provided a report from the Accrediting Authority Review Board, and Dr. Wilson Hershey provided a report from the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB). Open committee sessions in preparation for voting were then held, followed by plenary sessions in which committee reports on their progress and proposed revisions to the chapters of the NELAC Standard were presented to participants. During the voting session, all revisions to chapters were adopted by the Conference as proposed in committee sessions (with a few last-minute modifications by committee chairs). Chapter 6, Sections 6.4d, 6.5a, and 6.5b will be incorporated into the Standards with immediate implementation. Due to overwhelming opposition to the proposed chapter on Field Activities, the committee chair requested a straw vote. The majority of participants indicated their support in further developing the chapter; they said that committee is “on the right track.” The Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board also met in conjunction with NELAC 7.

Participants received conference materials at check-in which included a detailed agenda and copies of proposed changes for each of the chapters in the NELAC Standard (dated May 22, 2001). The registrant’s packet also included a one-page agenda, a detailed agenda, a summary of NELAC Board members and committee chairs, a NELAC directory, a pre-registration list of attendees, information about nominees for Chair-Elect and Board of Directors (BoD), a “NELAC Needs You” committee nomination form, a list of ground rules for the meeting, a summary of voting procedures, area maps and hotel information, a conference evaluation form, and an announcement for the Seventh NELAC Interim Meeting (NELAC 7i).

Registrants included representatives of local and county government, representatives of state and territorial government, representatives of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) headquarters programs and regional offices, and representatives of other federal government organizations. In the private sector, there were representatives from environmental testing laboratories, representatives from laboratory accreditation organizations, and from industry. Other groups attending included consultants, academia, and environmental interest groups.

OPENING PLENARY SESSION

The Seventh NELAC Annual Meeting was opened by Ms. Jeanne Hankins, NELAC Director. She offered a welcome from EPA, saying that they are delighted to be a part of this organization. Ms. Hankins then introduced the NELAC BoD and committee chairs. Members of the Board included Dr. Charles Brokopp (Chair), Ms. Sylvia Labie (Chair-Elect), Dr. James Pearson (Past-Chair), Dr. Stephen Billets (Acting Executive Secretary), Ms. Ann Marie Allen, Dr. Paul Kimsey, Mr. Tom Maloney, Ms. Anne Rhyne, Ms. Jackie Sample, and Mr. Joe Slayton.

Remarks from the Chair

Dr. Charles Brokopp welcomed participants to Utah and Salt Lake City. He said that Utah's diverse topography, landscape, and climate zones make it one of the most geologically unique places on earth. They have red rocks and arches in the south, magnificent mountains in the north, and beautiful deserts in the west. Utah also has wonderful cultural attractions and a unique heritage. Ancient American Indians, including the Anasazi, Utes, and Navajos settled in many areas of the state. They were followed years later by pioneers who struggled to cross the plains and mountains to settle in Utah. Dr. Brokopp spoke about the spirit of Utah, saying that they look forward to hosting the world for the winter Olympics on February 8-24, 2002. He then provided a description of local attractions and urged attendees to enjoy their stay.

Dr. Brokopp thanked members of his staff, primarily Mr. Paul Johnson, Ms. Colleen Freeze, Mr. David Mendenhall, Ms. Bev Jackson, and the laboratory surveyors, for the superb job they have done organizing the conference and attending to the many details.

He told participants that during this meeting, they would have an opportunity to move NELAP forward. Enhancements to the NELAC Standard would be debated, discussed, and adopted. Dr. Brokopp said he was sure we will come away from the meeting with an even better set of environmental standards. He said that he appreciates the work of the committees and all those who contribute at this meeting.

Dr. Brokopp reviewed the meeting schedule for the week and encouraged participants to attend the ELAB Open Forum. He announced that arrangements had been made for a banquet at the Rice Eccles Stadium, the site of the opening and closing 2002 Winter Olympic ceremonies, and encouraged participants to purchase tickets for the event. He also announced that ELAB would meet on Thursday afternoon and the voting session would be on Friday. Dr. Brokopp said that he hoped people would enjoy the meeting, experience Utah, and return again soon.

Welcome from Utah Department of Health

Dr. Richard Melton, Deputy Director of the Utah Department of Health, welcomed NELAC participants. He said that he is a laboratorian by trade and by love of science, but has moved somewhat reluctantly to administration. He said that laboratory administration is a "different kind of administration" and that he has developed an appreciation for what NELAC is doing.

Dr. Melton came to Utah in 1987. One thing he found particularly interesting about Utah is that they did certifications nationally and internationally. It seemed strange at the time that there was no mechanism for reciprocity between the states. He tried in earnest to find some way to fix this problem. He said that they needed to develop a system for certifications across the states. Approximately ten years ago, a number of state laboratory contacts met with the EPA in Washington, DC to address the obstacles and work on developing a process for national certification. Dr. Melton said that it is fantastic to see "light at the end of the tunnel." He expressed appreciation for the work that NELAC stakeholders are doing, offered congratulations for how far they have come, and wished them luck for meeting the goals of national laboratory certification.

Keynote Address

Dr. Brent Bradford, Deputy Director of the Utah Department of Environmental Quality, delivered the keynote address. Dr. Bradford has been very active in the Environmental Council of States (ECOS), serving on the Executive Committee and Planning Committee. He also served as Chairman of the State/EPA Information and Data Management Workgroup that began the process of standardizing environmental data, much of which comes from the laboratory.

Dr. Bradford told participants that he appreciated the opportunity to speak with them and welcomed them to the area. He said that this is an exciting time to be involved in the environmental business. Dr. Bradford gave four reasons why Governor Norman Bangerter originally wanted to develop a Department of Environmental Quality:

- No elected official can afford to ignore environmental issues because they are important to their constituents.
- Environmental policy decisions have far-reaching impacts on economics for any given region.
- We need more accountability at the highest levels of government for environmental decisions.
- To get attention from the federal government, environmental programs need to be located in a state-level cabinet.

He also listed the “Five C’s” of public policy:

- Credibility – Decisions should be based on good information.
- Constituency – Credibility and a more open agency allows us to build constituency.
- Compromise – No one ever gets everything he wants in government.
- Consensus – Consensus is difficult to achieve, but necessary if policy decisions are to last.
- Contingencies – We should be able to understand that we will probably not get everything we want. We may have to back up, regroup, and move forward again.

Dr. Bradford said that the new administration in Washington, D.C. gives us the opportunity to strengthen the current partnership between state environmental agencies and the federal government and its agencies, particularly the EPA. It also gives us the opportunity to engage in new environmental policy development.

In a recent letter to Vice President Richard Cheney from the ECOS (December 2000), it was pointed out that under federally-delegated authority, states perform approximately 80% of environmental enforcement and collect about 94% of environmental quality data. Given the preeminent role the states play in implementing federal environmental laws, ECOS asked for adequate federal support for the basic state-delegated programs and for

- Improved data collection and management;
- Better monitoring of the environmental and pollution processes;
- Targeted research and development;
- Better performance measures, including environmental indicators;
- Innovative ways to achieve and go beyond compliance;
- Reform of the oversight system and measurement of success; and
- More involvement in the budget and policy processes.

Dr. Bradford talked about some of the issues in Utah. He said that Utah is one of the fastest growing states in the west, and perhaps in the country. Because of the growth, the state is beginning to lose the very things that have attracted people. He said that they need to find a way to protect those things. Some of the issues he identified are

- Managed growth;
- Availability of water;
- Infrastructure for waste water treatment;
- Environmental and economic impact of the new drinking water standard for arsenic;
- Ambient air quality standards in non-attainment areas;

- Revitalization of brownfields;
- Power generation issues in the western United States;
- Nuclear waste disposal (expansion of a low-level nuclear waste site);
- Biological and chemical weapons disposal (Utah has 40% of the nations stockpile); and
- Hog and chicken farms.

Dr. Bradford said that ECOS met with the states and EPA to talk about environmental information and its great demand. He listed three focuses regarding environmental information: data collection, data storage and retrieval, and use of the data. He also discussed three concerns: data gaps, data quality, and appropriate use. Dr. Bradford said that environmental groups are concerned about data gaps. Industry groups are concerned about data quality. And states are concerned about appropriate use of data. Together they undertook the issue and decided to set up the National Information Exchange Network. Twenty-five million dollars were put into the national budget to develop this network. The network allows stewardship to exist at the point of data collection, but allows everyone electronic access to the information. This resolves the issue of whether EPA or the states own the data.

Increased demand for public access to environmental information creates a unique partnership between those who work in the field and those who use the data collected in the field. Dr. Bradford conveyed the need to support efforts for high quality data, produced in a timely manner, and at a reasonable cost. He said that we need to increase our efficiency and effectiveness as we collect data. We also need to make it accessible to those who need to use the information. Dr. Bradford emphasized the importance of a partnership between the laboratories and environmental agencies because environmental information is critical for making future policy decisions. These decisions will impact our children and grandchildren for generations to come.

Report from the NELAP Accrediting Authorities

Dr. Ken Jackson provided a report from the NELAP Accrediting Authorities. He prefaced the report by providing some background on the Accrediting Authority Workgroup. The Workgroup was formed at the inception of NELAP in July 1999 with eleven states. The group quickly lost one accrediting authority, but gained another. Since then, the Workgroup has held bi-weekly teleconferences. Dr. Jackson emphasized that the Workgroup is not a NELAC committee. They have no authority to set or modify policy. However, they do make recommendations to the NELAC committees as stakeholders. NELAC is the standard setting body, while the Workgroup is concerned with implementation of those standards. Decisions of the Workgroup are posted on the NELAC website and verbal reports are delivered at each national meeting.

Dr. Jackson then reviewed the decisions made by the Accrediting Authority Workgroup since the Sixth NELAC Interim Meeting (NELAC 6i) held in Las Vegas, NV. A more detailed report from the workgroup is available on the NELAC website.

Progress Since NELAC 6i

December 12, 2000:	Recommended to the NELAC BoD that the last week of January, 2001 was an appropriate implementation date for announcing the first accredited laboratories.
January 9, 2001:	Discussed first-round accreditation scenarios (anticipating the January 24 announcement date). Interim accreditation “invisible” at the request of ELAB.
January 24, 2001:	First-round accreditation implementation.
February 6, 2001:	Discussed secondary accreditation.
February 20, 2001:	Looked for overlapping Fields of Testing.

- March 20, 2001: Recommended revised language on subcontracting (to the Quality Systems Committee) and PCBs in oil (to the Proficiency Testing Committee).
- May 1, 2001: Recommended proposed language to the Accrediting Authority Committee to ask for additional time for accrediting authorities that do not have regulations in place yet. Recommended proposed language to the Accreditation Process Committee to change grandfathering clause to eliminate loopholes that would allow possibly unqualified people to be grandfathered.
- May 15, 2001: Recommended revised language to Chapter 5 on electronic record-keeping (too ambiguous as written).

Future Plans for Implementation

Dr. Jackson said that on January 24, 2001, there were 655 laboratories that received NELAP accreditation. By May 5, 2001, the number had increased to 697 laboratories with an additional 300 applications pending. If all applicants meet the NELAC standards, there will be about a thousand NELAP-accredited laboratories in the first round.

Dr. Jackson informed participants that the NELAP-accredited laboratories are listed on the NELAC Website. He said that about 190 small municipal laboratories have become accredited, which shows that the process **can** work for small laboratories. He also informed participants that on-site assessments will be completed within a few months, therefore, soon there will not be any interim-accredited laboratories left from the first round.

Dr. Jackson asked the question “Is the process working?” and answered it “Yes.” While the process is working and has exceeded early expectations, it is not perfect. He said that NELAP is going through a “beta-testing” stage. However, he pointed out that the accreditation process is only four months old and explained that there is a learning curve. He gave an example of a problem encountered during implementation of the program and also an example of the appeals process working. Dr. Jackson remarked how well the accrediting authority states are cooperating (they did not even talk to each other before NELAC). He emphasized that we have to work cooperatively for the program to succeed.

Dr. Jackson listed some future plans for improvement of NELAP:

- Reduce and hopefully eliminate the need for a laboratory to have more than one primary accrediting authority.
- Reduce the number of on-site assessments (policy for one state to do the on-site for others).
- In regard to complaints received from laboratories and individuals about on-site assessments, particularly regarding the length of time to do the on-site and consistency issues, the accrediting authorities will take a proactive approach to improve their quality systems and the on-site assessments. They plan to
 - Improve and increase the number of assessor training courses;
 - Include a review of on-site assessment during the approval process of states;
 - Have peer-review of on-site assessments; and
 - Share deficiency reports among accrediting authorities.
- Create standard operating procedures (SOPs) for on-site assessments. They will form a subgroup to develop draft language to be submitted to the On-site Assessment Committee which states the minimum that the accrediting authorities should look at during the on-site assessment.

In conclusion, Dr. Jackson asked stakeholders to be patient. Many laboratories expect to have their second on-site assessment soon. There will still be some differences because of the learning curve. However, the accrediting authorities will continue holding their bi-weekly meetings and will work

diligently to improve the process. While NELAP is already successful, Dr. Jackson said that it will get better.

Report from the Accrediting Authority Review Board

Mr. George Mills presented the annual report for the Accrediting Authority Review Board (AARB). He said that the AARB has not been as busy this year as the previous year. There were no appeals of NELAC decisions. There were no new accrediting authorities recognized. Mr. Mills said that the two-year renewal cycle will be very important in reviewing the processes that Dr. Jackson was talking about.

Mr. Mills recognized members of the AARB and thanked everyone who expressed interest in serving on the board. He announced that Dr. Jack Ruckman is rotating off the AARB this year and that he (George Mills) will be cycling off next year. Mr. Mills stated that the AARB's charter has not changed since the last annual meeting and that their recommendations from 2000 also remain the same.

This year the AARB primarily looked at the two-year renewal cycle. They also reviewed the packet of information sent to assessment teams (e.g., checklists and cover letters). They reviewed correspondence from the NELAP Director (per last year's recommendation) and the establishment of records (for consistent formats, location of records, etc.). Next year, the board is planning to review all references to the AARB in the NELAC Standard to see if the AARB's charter should be revised. They also plan to audit records management and see if new SOPs are needed.

Report from the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board

Dr. Wilson Hershey provided a report from ELAB. He began by informing participants that after serving six years with ELAB, this is his last meeting. He then proceeded to share his "10,000 ft. view" which includes ELAB's major accomplishments and recommendations since NELAC 6 and his thoughts regarding important future activities for NELAP.

The major ELAB work products last year were the Performance Based Measurement Systems (PBMS) critical review article and the PBMS strawmodel. Following presentations at the interim meeting in Las Vegas, both were forwarded to the Quality Systems Committee. Since that time, the Quality Systems Committee has been working on integrating PBMS into Chapter 5.

Last year, ELAB was asked by the NELAC BoD to form a subcommittee on source emissions. The Air Source Emissions Task Team (ASETT), a subcommittee comprised of a diverse group of over 200 people, prepared a draft source emissions document. Following numerous conference calls and emails on the subject, it was clear that consensus would not be reached anytime soon – so ELAB made the following two recommendations at their April 24, 2001 meeting. These recommendations were forwarded to the NELAC BoD.

- ELAB recommended that NELAC delay adoption of accreditation standards for stack testing for two years. ELAB recognizes the Field Activities Committee's concern for the quality of source testing and reporting data. In lieu of accreditation under NELAP, the xstates and EPA are, of course, free to promulgate regulations as they deem appropriate.
- ELAB recommended that ASETT and MSE be disbanded as subcommittees of ELAB and the Field Activities Committee, respectively.

A summary of the reasons for their recommendations were as follows:

- Only 2 states currently have such accreditation programs. Neither wanted to take a lead role in developing national standards.
- There was no clear consensus among stakeholders (BoD, EPA, ELAB, ASETT, etc.).

- Various NELAC meetings were getting bogged down on issues relating to this new test area instead of being able to devote time to the smooth rollout of the basic program.

Dr. Hershey provided a few comments regarding the upcoming year. Since NELAP approved 600 plus laboratories earlier this year, some questions have come up on the consistency of requirements, thoroughness of the audits, etc. He said that he views these issues as normal startup problems, problems that can be addressed through training, by auditing the auditors, and by paying attention to feedback from surveys like the one being conducted by the American Council of Independent Laboratories (ACIL) involving all NELAP-approved laboratories. He said that startups are rarely as good as they will become later. He said that NELAP can improve, using the same spirit of cooperation and the same process that brought us so far in the last six years.

Dr. Hershey encouraged NELAC to make the program truly national. He said that we need to get more state and federal programs on board. About 22 states offer only drinking water accreditation, four more offer either UST only or UST and drinking water, and one offers no accreditation. These states with limited scopes may not see the benefit in joining NELAP at this time. However, roughly a dozen non-NELAP states do have broader-based programs. Dr. Hershey said that we need to do whatever we can to tailor NELAP to not only meet the needs of existing stakeholders but to draw in these additional states and federal programs as well. Together we can make it happen.

Remarks from the Department of Defense

Ms. Jackie Sample provided remarks from the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). She spoke briefly about DoD's involvement and commitment to NELAC. The DoD has been involved since the beginning of NELAC and remains committed to this process.

Ms. Sample said that some time ago, DoD recognized the need to improve their environmental data quality. Since then, several programs for environmental data quality have been developed in the Army, Navy, and Air Force. She stated that DoD considers NELAC the baseline for their quality systems, similar to a driver's license. Although DoD will always perform project-specific audits, they are looking more and more to NELAC to take care of the quality systems part of the process.

The DoD has agreed to co-sponsor the NELAC 7i meeting with the EPA. It will be held December 3-7, 2001. There will be training sessions in conjunction with the meeting. Ms. Sample said that DoD is pleased with standards set so far, but NELAC has a long way to go. She said that the NELAC process is a continuous process of improvement. Our goal is to "ruggedize" the standards to make it work for us all.

Other Remarks

Ms. Jeanne Hankins informed participants that EPA's application to become a NELAP accrediting authority is ready to submit. EPA will become a NELAP accrediting authority soon. She also said that EPA recently proposed a 5-year funding plan for NELAC. Dr. Henry Longest, Acting Administrator for the Office of Research and Development, has signed-off on this. However, the amount of funding is somewhat dependent on the budget. EPA will make a presentation at NELAC 7i on the 2-year renewal process.

COMMITTEE WORKING SESSIONS

For two and a half days following the opening plenary session, concurrent working sessions involving all standing, administrative and *ad hoc* committees were held. Progress made by each committee, as well as principal unresolved issues (and time frames for addressing them, if defined) are listed below. In keeping with the goals established for the meeting, all working sessions were of an open-forum format; a session

typically included committee members, Federal and state representatives, as well as representatives from laboratories, accrediting organizations, industry and the general public. A handout of changes proposed during NELAC 7 was made available to participants prior to the voting session.

Program Policy & Structure – Chair: Dr. Kenneth Jackson

Highlights included the proposal of a new scope of accreditation “matrix-technology/method-analyte/analyte group” (Section 1.8.1), language referring to Field Activities, and a proposed Data Integrity Program (outlined). The term “reciprocity” was globally changed to “recognition” and the term “fields of testing” was changed to “fields of accreditation.” The committee requests input on the Tables of Technology and Methods.

The committee plans to formulate/define the analyte groups, in collaboration with the Proficiency Testing Committee (by NELAC 7i). They will also complete/correct the Technology and Method Tables (by NELAC 7i), publish them on the NELAC Website (by January 2002) and in hard-copy along with the NELAC Standards (by July 2002).

The committee’s voting agenda will include:

- Proposed changes to Section 1.8.1 plus Glossary (with a 2-year implementation time frame)
- Remaining proposed changes to Chapter 1 (with immediate implementation)

Proficiency Testing – Chair: Ms. Barbara Burmeister

Highlights for the Proficiency Testing Committee included the Data Reporting and Scoring, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), proficiency testing reporting limits, development of standardized method and analyte codes. Another highlight was the development of a draft SOP for the annual review and additions to Fields of Proficiency Testing Tables and a time line for implementation of changes.

Proposed changes include a global editorial change from “PT field of testing” to “field of proficiency testing”; changing the field of proficiency testing in Section 2.1.3 to “matrix – technology – analyte/analyte group”; adding a note to Section 2.1.3 to clarify acceptance criteria when more than one method is reported in a single PT study; changes to Sections 2.3.3, 2.7.2, and 2.7.3 to allow the use of NELAC PT samples for corrective action and expanding a laboratory’s scope of accreditation; changes to Section 2.6 to standardize report formats; changes to Section B.1.2 and C.5 to allow for analyte groups and 80% passing criteria for analyte groups; and changes to Section C.1 to reference the Fields of Proficiency Testing Tables.

The committee has the following unresolved issues: define analyte groups (will meet with Chapter 1 committee and resolve by NELAC 7i), define uniform electronic format (will meet with NELAP Accrediting Authority Workgroup and resolve by NELAC 7i), update the PT Data Reporting and Scoring FAQs to correct the inconsistency with the BoD policy (ASAP), and post revised field of proficiency testing tables on the website (ASAP).

A PT subcommittee will continue to examine the feasibility of tracking and evaluating PT performance by preparation method and will identify acceptance limit criteria that do not seem to be working. The PT Committee will work with the EPA to revise the National Standards Criteria Document. The committee also plans to explore the possibility of creating a permanent subcommittee of technical experts to evaluate current acceptance criteria and monitor performance.

The committee’s voting agenda includes:

- Chapter 2 with the exception of Sections 2.1.3, B.1.2, and C.5
- Section 2.1.3, B.1.2, and C.5
- Section 2.1.3 Note

On-site Assessment – Chair: Mr. Bill Ingersoll

Mr. Ingersoll highlighted the proposed changes to Chapter 3. He said that minor changes were made for consistency. The committee removed the basic and technical course requirement from the chapter and incorporated them into Appendices A and B. Appendix A outlines basic assessor training course requirements. Appendix B outlines technical training course requirements for assessors.

The committee has unresolved issues for Appendices C and D. This includes the minimum elements for Accrediting Authority On-site Assessment Standard Operating Procedures (Appendix C) and an assessment of procedures for test methods (Appendix D). The committee plans to review and revise the appendices by NELAC 8.

In addition to work on Appendices C and D, the committee plans to review the groupings of technical training disciplines in Section 3.2.3.2, review and potentially revise the confidential business information (CBI) standard in Section 3.4.5, and remove language in Section 3.7.4 about the release of the assessment report to the National Database. This work should be complete by NELAC 7i.

Accreditation Process – Chair: Mr. Gleason Wheatley

Highlights for the Accreditation Process Committee were mobile laboratory issues and the grandfather clause. Mr. Wheatley said that the committee hopes to clarify language regarding mobile laboratories and field activities by NELAC 7i. Future plans are to continue communication with the Field Activities Committee and clarify mobile laboratory issues related to Section 6.2.2.a with the Accrediting Authority Committee. The voting agenda will include all proposed changes for Chapter 4.

Quality Systems – Chair: Mr. Scott Siders

The highlights and substantive issues of the Quality Systems Committee are as follows:

- Presented and discussed work to date on ISO 17025 integration (ISO 17025 subcommittee).
- Participants want the standard to be consistent with ISO 17025. Language in NELAC Standard organized to follow ISO 17025.
- Presented draft language developed by PBMS subcommittee.
- Discussed proposed language for Appendix D.1 and made refinements based on comments/wording from the floor.
- Presented and discussed work to date on developing appendix on asbestos testing.
- New language for Section 5.14.b.1, subcontracting.
- Discussed proposed language for Appendix D.3 and made changes based on floor comments.

An unresolved issue for the committee is how to demonstrate if a new or reconditioned instrument is operationally capable of meeting test method requirements. They hope to address this issue by September 2001.

Future plans are to finish integration of ISO 17025 and PBMS language in Chapter 5 (by October, 2001); finish the Asbestos Testing Appendix (by October, 2001); obtain further direction on ISO 17025 integration and PBMS from the BoD; and solicit NELAC stakeholders regarding ISO 17025, PBMS, and Asbestos drafts (prior to NELAC 7i).

The voting agenda will include:

- All of Section 5.0 - 5.16, Appendix D.2 and D.5
- Appendix D.1 (for immediate implementation)
- Appendix D.3 (for immediate implementation)

Accrediting Authority – Chair: Mr. Louis Johnson

Mr. Johnson reviewed the committee's highlights. He said that as part of the 2-year renewal process for accrediting authorities, the NELAP evaluator(s) will observe the accrediting authority performing a laboratory audit. Another highlight was the creation of proposed standards for appealing accreditation decisions based on differences in standards interpretations. An unresolved issue is the development of a process for non-NELAP accrediting authorities to quickly remediate issue(s) of a NELAP-accredited laboratory by a NELAP Accrediting Authority. Future plans are to review and compare Chapter 6 to the National Cooperation for Laboratory Accreditation (NACLA) Standards and to assist with the development of SOPs for evaluation of accrediting authorities.

The committee's voting agenda is as follows:

- Changes to Sections 6.2.3, 6.3.1.b, 6.3.3.1.3.b, 6.4.d, 6.4.2.a, 6.4.2.b, and 6.4.2.e
- Section 6.10 (entirely) and Appendix A
- Changes to Section 6.5.a and 6.5.b

Field Activities – Chair: Dr. Bart Simmons

Substantive issues for the Field Activities Committee included a general sampling standard, mobile laboratory accreditation, and field measurement priority. Field measurement and mobile laboratory definitions remain unresolved (action by November, 2001). Future plans include the proposed Federal Register notice and developing priorities for media sampling and measurement (action by November, 2001). The committee has chosen to defer their petition to the BoD to resume standards development for source emissions. However, they plan to take action on this by 2003. The voting agenda consists of proposed Section 7.1, as amended.

Regulatory Coordination – Chair: Dr. Carl Kircher

The committee approved revisions to model rule for laboratory accreditation; these will be posted on the NELAC Website. They also reviewed the EPA semi-annual regulatory agenda for October, 2000. There are some unresolved issues regarding the following (whether they belong in the NELAC Standard or Certification Rules):

- State supplemental certification criteria (Section 1.8.2)
- Accrediting laboratories in noncontiguous facilities (Section 4.0)
- Mobile laboratories requiring separate accreditation (Section 4.0)
- Fields of testing offered for accreditation (Section 1.5.2.3.1)
- Fields of testing for exempted technical directors (Section 4.1.1.2)
- PTs performed according to a defined schedule (Section 2.7.6)
- Laboratory accreditation status based on PT results (Sections 2.2.4 and 4.1.4.e)
- On-site assessments if laboratory ownership or location changes (Section 4.1.8)
- Allowances for accreditation without on-site assessment (Section 4.6.2)

By NELAC 7i, the committee plans to revise the Model Laboratory Accreditation Rule based on NELAC 7 voting results, review the EPA PT criteria document for errors and inconsistencies (and report to Proficiency Testing Committee), and review the April 2001 EPA regulatory agenda (and report to NELAC).

Membership and Outreach – Chair: Ms. Margaret Prevost

With audience participation, Ms. Prevost said that the committee discussed the development of web-based and hard copy information including:

- Simplified instructions for laboratories to become NELAC-accredited
- Brochures and/or newsletters for laboratories in non-NELAC states for data users and professional organizations
- Lists of organizations, professional and local, to receive information

Future plans for the committee are to make the NELAC Website more user-friendly and develop printed material to complement the website.

Nominating – Chair: Dr. James Pearson

Nominees for the NELAC BoD (members at-large) are Ms. Aurora Shields from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and Mr. Thomas Maloney from the USGS National Water Quality Laboratory. The nominee for chair-elect is Dr. Paul Kimsey from the California Department of Health Services.

National Database – Chair: Mr. Matt Caruso

Mr. Caruso informed the conference that implementation of the NELAC database has been delayed due to changes in website security requirements at EPA. They plan to have the database on the EPA developmental server within two months. Regarding unresolved issues, Mr. Caruso said that some of the database fields need to be identified better. The database also needs unique identifying numbers assigned to each laboratory. These issues will be resolved as soon as possible. Future plans include beta testing by the accrediting authorities when the application is deployed on the developmental server.

Transition – Chair: Ms. Sylvia Labie

The Transition Committee's main highlights included: communication problems, setting up a non-profit organization, secondary accreditation applications, consumer expectations, and a 60-day extension for the renewal process and NELAP recognition. The committee has no items on the voting agenda.

The Transition Committee is working in an ongoing fashion on communication problems. They will consider the role and feasibility of a non-profit organization by October, 2001. They will review, assess, and present the results of the ACIL questionnaire by September, 2001. The committee plans to develop a strawman document for secondary accreditation applications by July, 2001. They will send a recommendation to the BoD on the 60-day extension for the renewal process and NELAP recognition (by May 31, 2001). Finally, they will continue to monitor the accreditation process for additional areas of concern.

VOTING SESSION

Dr. Brokopp opened the voting session by introducing Dr. Kenneth Jackson, chair of the Nominating committee. Dr. Jackson reported that the committee submitted the following nominations:

Chair-Elect

Dr. Paul Kimsey
(CA Department of Health Services)

Members-at-large

Ms. Aurora Shields
(KS Dept. of Health & Environment)
Mr. Thomas Maloney
(USGS National Water Quality Laboratory)

He moved that they be elected by acclamation, which they were.

Voting on proposed changes to the chapters, as noted below, proceeded.

CLOSING PLENARY SESSION

Dr. Brokopp then recognized the efforts of all participants in making this Annual meeting a success, including the staff of the Utah Department of Health, the staff of the Little America Hotel, and the RTI team. He noted that his term as chair ends with the close of this meeting and asked the incoming chair, Ms. Silvia Labie, for her comments.

Ms. Labie characterized the first year of NELAP accreditation as a year of significant progress in which NELAC stakeholders learned from their mistakes and took proactive measures to resolve many of the concerns expressed at NELAC 6i. She embraced the keynote speaker's five Cs of public policy (credibility, constituency, compromise, consensus, and contingencies) as a part of NELAC and urged participants to consider the four additional Cs of commitment, consistency, cooperation, and communication. Ms. Labie challenged all stakeholders and the NELAC organization to commit to continuing efforts to implement the principles of performance based measurement systems and to finding additional means of supporting NELAC. She challenged stakeholders to commit to openness in expressing concerns. She challenged committees to commit to remaining receptive and open to stakeholder comments and concerns. She challenged accrediting authorities to commit to resolving inconsistencies. She challenged laboratories to commit to quality. Pointing to consistency as the key to NELAC's success, Ms. Labie urged each of the NELAC organizations to regard comments on inconsistencies seriously, but not personally. She noted that cooperation will be necessary to show the nation that NELAC works and that NELAP laboratories are quality laboratories. Cooperation will also be necessary for NELAC and NELAP to gain national recognition sufficient to attract additional interested parties. Finally, Ms. Labie stressed communication as holding an important niche in environmental decisions. She noted the need to communicate the importance of quality data in making decisions to the data users and to the clients. She also noted the need to communicate to engineering organizations, consulting organizations, and other individuals that collect samples the importance of their role and the importance of becoming a part of the NELAC process.

The complete text of Ms. Labie's closing comments can be accessed at <http://www.epa.gov/ttnnela1/annual/nelac7web.pdf>

The NELAP Director, Ms. Jeanne Hankins, reviewed the next steps in distributing the newly approved chapters to the NELAC Standard, including the issue of implementation date. She noted the following deadlines that need to be met in order to prepare for the Seventh NELAC Interim Meeting, scheduled for December 3 - 7, 2001 in Arlington, VA:

Participants' comments to Committees	August 1, 2001
Final Draft of proposed chapter complete	October 1, 2001
Proposed chapters posted on NELAC website	November 1, 2001

She stated that a Federal Register notice is planned to alert the public that NELAC plans to begin consideration of sampling activities in the near future. She also noted that arrangements with a non-profit organization to handle many NELAC activities will continue to be developed. She also reported that deployment of the NELAC database is anticipated in the next few months. Finally, she reported that application of Oregon, and EPA, as accrediting authorities is in process and she expects completion this year.

There being no further business of the Conference, Dr. Brokopp adjourned the Seventh NELAC Annual meeting.

Voting Issues

Chapter 1 – Program Policy and Structure

Dr. Kenneth Jackson, chair of the committee, reviewed changes being proposed by the committee. Dr. Jackson then moved adoption of changes proposed to section 1.8.1 and the Glossary.

Issue 1: Changes proposed to section 1.8.1 and the Glossary.
The issue passed.

Dr. Jackson then moved adoption of all other changes proposed to the chapter, for immediate implementation.

Issue 2: All other changes proposed to the chapter (immediate implementation).
The issue passed.

Chapter 2 – Proficiency Testing

Ms. Barbara Burmeister, chair of the committee, reviewed changes being proposed by the committee. Ms. Burmeister then moved adoption of all changes proposed to the chapter, excluding sections 2.1.3, B.1.2, C.5

Issue 3: All changes proposed to the chapter, excluding sections 2.1.3, B.1.2, C.5.
The issue passed.

Ms. Burmeister then moved adoption of changes proposed to sections 2.1.3, B.1.2, C.5

Issue 4: Changes proposed to sections 2.1.3, B.1.2, C.5.
The issue passed.

Chapter 3 – On-site Assessment

Mr. William Ingersoll, chair of the committee, reviewed changes being proposed by the committee. Mr. Ingersoll then moved adoption of all changes proposed to the chapter.

Issue 5: All changes proposed to the chapter.
The issue passed.

Mr. Ingersoll then moved adoption of Appendix A, as proposed for immediate implementation.

Issue 6: Appendix A, as proposed (immediate implementation).
The issue passed.

Mr. Ingersoll then moved adoption of Appendix B, as proposed for immediate implementation.

Issue 7: Appendix B, as proposed (immediate implementation).
The issue passed.

Chapter 4 – Accreditation Process

Mr. Gleason Wheatley, chair of the committee, reviewed changes being proposed by the committee. Mr. Wheatley then moved adoption of all changes proposed to the chapter

Issue 8: All changes proposed to the chapter.
The issue passed.

Chapter 5 – Quality Systems

Mr. Scott Siders, chair of the committee, reviewed changes being proposed by the committee. Mr. Siders then moved adoption of changes proposed to sections 5.0 - 5.16, D2, D5

Issue 9: Changes proposed to sections 5.0 - 5.16, D2, D5.
The issue passed.

Mr. Siders then moved adoption of changes proposed to section D.1.

Issue 10: Changes proposed to section D.1
The issue passed.

Mr. Siders then moved adoption of changes proposed to section D.3; in the ensuing discussion, he agreed to include wording suggested from the floor.

Issue 11: Changes proposed to section D.3, as amended from the floor.
The issue passed.

Chapter 6 – Accrediting Authority

Mr. Louis Johnson, chair of the committee, reviewed changes being proposed by the committee. Mr. Johnson then moved for adoption of all changes proposed to the chapter, excluding sections 6.4d, 6.5 a&b, 6.10, and Appendix A.

Issue 12: All changes proposed to the chapter, excluding sections 6.4d, 6.5 a&b, 6.10, Appendix A.
The issue passed.

Mr. Johnson then moved adoption of changes proposed to section 6.4d for immediate implementation.

Issue 13: Changes proposed to section 6.4d (immediate implementation).
The issue passed.

Mr. Johnson then moved adoption of changes proposed to section 6.10 and Appendix A for immediate implementation.

Issue 14: Changes proposed to section 6.10 and Appendix A (immediate implementation).
The issue passed.

Mr. Johnson then moved adoption of Changes proposed to sections 6.5 a&b for immediate implementation.

Issue 15: Changes proposed to sections 6.5 a&b (immediate implementation).
The issue passed.

Chapter 7 – Field Activities

Dr. Barton Simmons, chair of the committee, reported that the committee has postponed voting on the proposed chapter until NELAC 8. However, he asked for a straw poll on the participants' desire for inclusion of sampling to be added to the Standard: there were a large number of participants in favor of inclusion of sampling.